

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

Claim 1. (Currently amended) A washer comprising wadding material and having an uncompressed portion, an aperture extending therethrough the wadding material, characterised in that the wadding material is and a permanently compressed portion at least around the periphery of the aperture to impart sufficient elasticity to the modified wadding material such that, when fitted to upholstery together with a tuft, the dimensions of the aperture may increase sufficiently to accommodate engagement means for the tuft and then return to a resting state after disengagement of the engagement means for the tuft so as to prevent disengagement of the tuft.

Claim 2. (Original) A washer according to claim 1, wherein the wadding material contains fusible material.

Claim 3. (Original) A washer according to claim 2, wherein the wadding material containing fusible material is compressed and/or fused at least around the periphery of the aperture.

Claim 4. (Currently amended) A washer according to claim 1 comprising wadding material and having an aperture extending therethrough, characterized in that the wadding material is permanently compressed at least around the periphery of the aperture to impart sufficient elasticity to the modified wadding material such that, when fitted to upholstery together with a tuft, the dimensions of the aperture may increase sufficiently to accommodate engagement means for the tuft and then return to a resting state after disengagement of the engagement means for the tuft so as to prevent disengagement of the tuft, wherein an area immediately surrounding the aperture is uncompressed.

Claim 5. (Previously presented) A washer according to claim 1, associated with at least one further such washer.

Claim 6. (Original) A washer according to claim 5, connected in series to at least one further such washer.

Claim 7. (Previously presented) A washer according to claim 1, wherein the aperture is provided by one or more cuts in the washer.

Claim 8. (Original) A washer according to claim 7, wherein the aperture is provided by two cuts in the form of a cross.

Claim 9. (Withdrawn) A method of manufacturing a washer from wadding material, the method comprising, in any order, the following steps (a) to (c): (a) permanently compressing the wadding material at least in a region intended to form the aperture of the washer and its periphery; (b) forming an aperture extending through the compressed region of the material, the material being compressed around the periphery of the aperture; and (c) separating the washer from the wadding material; so that the compressed wadding material of the washer exhibits sufficient elasticity at least around the periphery of the aperture such that, when the washer is fitted to upholstery together with a tuft, the dimensions of the aperture may increase sufficiently to accommodate engagement means for the tuft and then return to a resting state after disengagement of the engagement means for the tuft so as to prevent disengagement of the tuft.

Claim 10. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 9, wherein the wadding material contains fusible material.

Claim 11. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 10, wherein step (a) comprises compression and/or fusion of the wadding material containing fusible material, such that the washer is compressed and/or fused around the periphery of the aperture.

Claim 12. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 9, wherein steps (a) and (b) occur substantially simultaneously.

Claim 13. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 9, wherein step (a) is carried out so as to leave an area immediately surrounding the aperture unmodified.

Claim 14. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 9, carried out continuously to produce a washer associated with one or more further such washers.

Claims 15 - 19. (Canceled)

Claim 20. (Previously presented) Upholstery fitted with at least one washer as defined in claim 1.

Claims 21 - 26. (Canceled)

Claim 27. (New) A washer according to claim 1, wherein an area immediately surrounding the aperture is uncompressed.